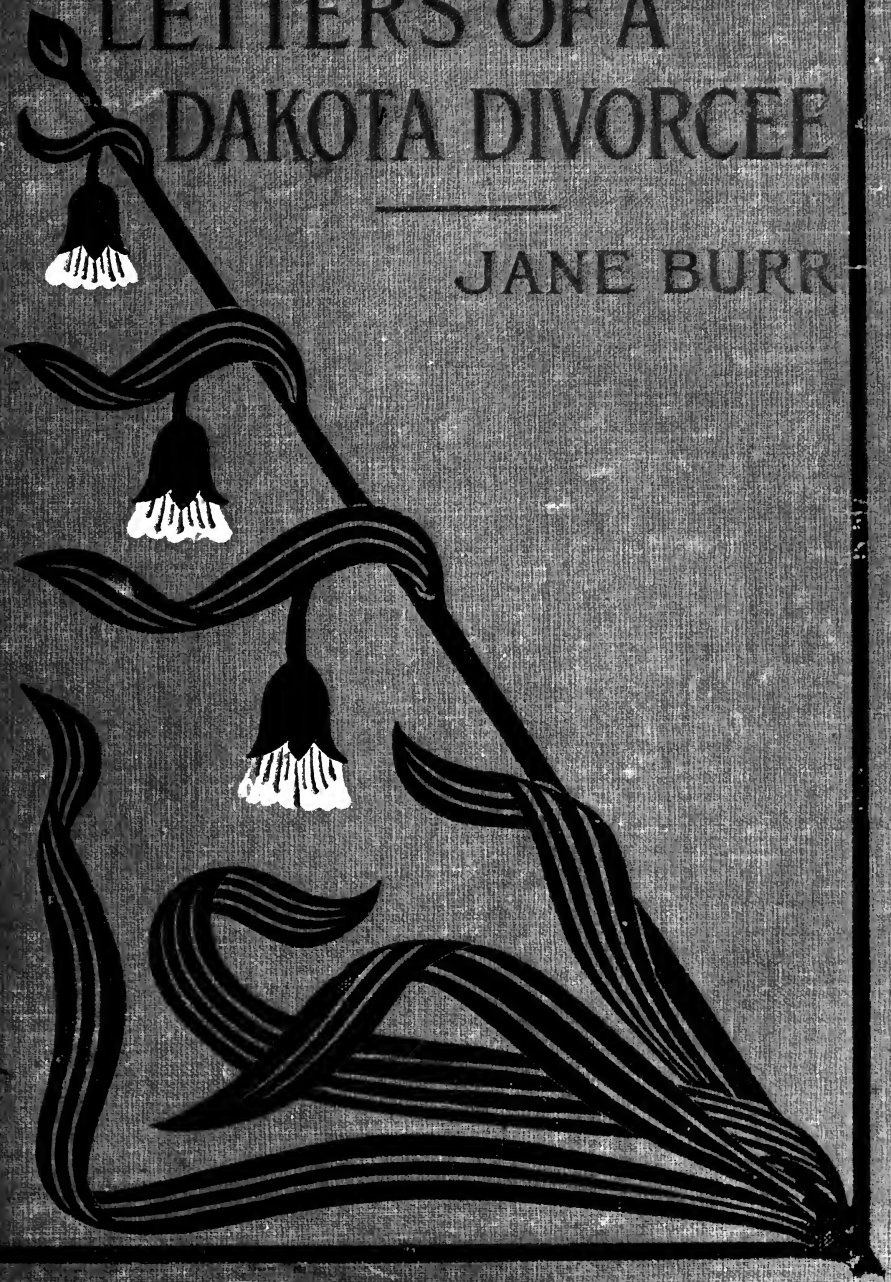
LETTERS OF A DAKOTA DIVORCEE

JANE BURR



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Letters of
A Dakota Divorcee

By Jane Burr

BOSTON
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PS 3507
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Gratefully Dedicated to
My Sioux Falls Friends.

LOAN STACK

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

This little volume will soon assume the proportions of an invaluable reference book as the Divorcee is gradually becoming extinct in South Dakota.

Species may thrive in a given latitude and longitude for ages. Suddenly the atmospheric, climatic, or diatetic conditions become so altered as to preclude the further development of the species—yes even the further survival of the animal. The result may be either of two alternatives:

1st. The animal finding the habitat no longer conducive to its well being may migrate singly or in bunches to another environment. In this case scientists have noted

that the animal undergoes a considerable morphological and physiological change.

2nd. In an environment unfavorable to its existence an animal may become extinct.

In the case of the South Dakota Divorcee the former alternative would seem to be the course followed, for up to date the animal has shown itself to be quite too resourceful to lapse into that most archaic condition—extinctness.

Time was when it roamed the prairies and hills of the State in vast herds, but owing to the removal of the protective underbrush in the form of the Referendum (which decrees that one year is necessary for its complete development), it has gone in great droves to Nevada and Oklahoma, which promise to be a more suitable environment for it.

There are a few rare species left, but they

are disconsolate and hang-jawed and by no means representative of the species. In former years the Divorcee reached maturity in three short months, and was so tame that it built its lair near the city limits and some even ventured quite into the hearts of the villages and attempted to live there. But these were half tamed individuals and by no means indicative of the genus as a whole. Then peculiar to relate, the environmental influences caused them to grow less rapidly and six whole months passed before a single specimen could call itself full fledged. The other Dakota animals sported around with the Divorcee and received it *a bras ouverts,* but the latter developed a slight *degage* mannerism and the other beasts grew alarmed and crawled within their dens.

Now they have almost died out entirely as

the atmosphere grew not only unfriendly, but owing to the sudden cool change their development was intensely slow. The animal originally migrated from New York and thus anything slow would naturally unnerve its intuitively high strung temperament.

And if in some future sociological period of the earth's history some antiquarian of the post-aviatorian age, prying into the *modus vivendi* of the men of pre-air-shippian times can learn "a thing or two" about that delicate gazelle-like mammal so as to show his contemporaries how "fierce" living was before the age of trial marriages and legitimate affinities, the dessicated author will rattle what is left of her teeth in a contended mummified smile.

Duckie Lorna:

Sip a mint julip—slowly, gently, through a long dry straw, then before it dies in you, read my P. O. mark—Sioux Falls, South Dakota,—Yes, I've bolted!

Don't dare to tell anyone where I am for if my husband should find out, he might make me go where I could get a divorce more quickly—You know I'm here for his health. I would splash round in orange blossoms, and this is the result.

My boarding house is a love, furnished with prizes got with soap—" Buy ten bars of our Fluffy Ruffles soap, and we will mail you, prepaid, one of our large size solid mahogany library tables."

Would you believe dear, that these Sioux

Fallians have already complained because I bathe my dear, shaggy Othello in the bath tub. And there isn't a human being here with a pedigree as long as his.

If you hear any talk about my being seen in a Staten Island beer garden with Bern Cameron, don't believe one word of it—we didn't go in at all, the place was too smelly. And that fib about his giving me a diamond ring,—deny it please, as I have never shown it to a soul—So you can see how people manufacture gossip.

I walk to the Penitentiary for recreation, as I may have to visit there some day and I never like to be surprised at anything. It isn't refined.

My Attorney is thoroughly picturesque. He wears a coat in his office that his wife must have made. His collar came from

Noah's grab bag, and, if you remember, there was no washing machine on the ark. A heavy gold chain meanders down his shirt front to protect his watch from improbable theft. On Sunday he passes the contribution box and is considered a philanthropic pest. I asked how much the fee would be and he said, "One hundred if you furnish witnesses, two hundred if we do." You can hire a man for five dollars out here to swear that he killed you.

When my attorney talks, he sits on his haunches, showing his teeth that would do credit to a shark, and fancies he's smiling when he permits his cracked purple lips to slide back. I wouldn't trust my case to him, only he could not lose if he tried.

Every time I look at him I wonder if there could be a face behind that nose and those

whiskers, which give his head the appearance of a fern dish. He wears an old silk hat whose nap is attacked with a skin disease. They say he belongs to one of the first families of this town—first on the way coming up from the station I suppose. He was married years ago, but isn't working at it now. I am so unstrung after our seances that I feel like crawling right out under a bush and eating sage. If I weren't afraid of him I'd raise my umbrella while he talks—his conversation is so showery. In my ingrown heart I hate him so there is no danger for me, tho' I've heard that he's a perfect fusser with the women.

I telephoned the livery stable yesterday and asked if any of the hearse horses were idle, as I'd like to take a ride. The fellow said he'd send me a winner, so I togged up in my bloomers, boots and spurs and stood on the

veranda waiting. A young boy galloped up with something dragging behind him. I said: "Do you call that insect a horse?" he answered; "No, but it used to be, m'am." The poor creature was all bones and only waiting for a nudge to push him into the grave. I mounted the broncho, which kept "bronking," but after an encouraging tclk-tclk, I made a detour of the block, then sent the nag to the stable.

There were two children and a dog drowned here yesterday—it almost makes one afraid to go near the tub.

The man who sits on my right at the table, says he's here for nervousness. First time I ever heard a divorce called that, but anyway we all know that he gets out of jail on December, and I will be glad, for the way he plays the anvil chorus with his soup makes me

get out of my skin backwards. Hope some day that the Devil will play dominoes with his bones.

The lady on the other end, chews with her lips and of course I'm always excited for fear her dinner will fall overboard. The way she juggles food would get her a job in the vaudeville game any day. She sits up as tho' she'd been impaled, and the shaft broken off in her body.

Long ago—a being, desirous of unhitchment could come here, rent a room, hang her pajamas in the closet and fade away back to Broadway, but times are changed, and you must serve six months or the Judge's wife will not let you have a divorce. The Judge's house is next to mine and the way I look demure when I pass, is a heathenism hypocrisy. But he is under petticoat tyranny and I dread ruffling the petticoat.

Formerly the law was three months, but the Cataract Hotel had the Legislature change it as they could not make enough money.

We had chicken last night and asparagus tips—did you ever notice what a lot of skin a boarding house chicken has? And the tips just missed by one, being tip. The meals are an unsatisfactory substitute for something to eat, and I find myself filling up on bread to keep my stomach and backbone apart.

I am up against old timers that are always to be met at boarding houses—the dear old soldier and the lady "too heavy for light amusements, and not old enough to sit in the corner and knit," as George Ade puts it. She is simply ubiquitous; she is everywhere; she does not gossip! Oh no! Still she wonders if they really are married, you know, and if that strange man is her brother or not? Oh

you know the whole tribe! Dear old parasites on the body politic! I have also had sudden paralysis of the jaw from looking into a country mirror and was not again convinced, until consulting my own hand glass during the night that one of my eyes had not slipped down below my nose. I can get along very well if my hair is not parted at all, but I insist upon my features remaining in the same locations.

I am copying down some of the stories that I hear as they are well worth it, and may come in handy some day. I have the advantage of coming upon them suddenly for the first time, with an absolute unbiased mind, which like the Bellman's chart in "The Hunting of the Snark" is "a perfect and absolute blank."

I know I shall go mad before the six months are up, for after ten days, I am down-

down deep in a bog of melancholy, and so bored that I feel like the president of the gimlet club.

My stomach like nature abhors a vacuum, so me to the strangled eggs and baked spuds which are our unfailing morning diet.

In the name of Charity, send me messages from the world I love.

Devotedly,

MARIANNE.

Dearest Lorna:

There's an old maid here (Heaven knows she's out of place) who wears her hair in one of those "tied for life knots," and she comes tip-toeing to my room each night to ask me if I think she'll ever get a man. Because I've had one, and am making something that resembles a trousseau, she thinks that I have a recipe for cornering the male market. Her dental arch is like the porte-cochere of the new Belmont Hotel, and last night a precocious four-year-old said, "Miss Mandy, why don't you tuck your teeth in?"—Miss Mandy would if she could but she can't. She is the sort who would stop her own funeral to sew up a hole in her shroud.

The moonlight nights here are a perfect

irritation, and I really think this moon isn't half as calloused to demonstration as our dear old New York moon. There are so few men here that the female congregation is getting terribly out of practice.

I have found out lately that our attorneys out here rob us of everything and politely allow us to keep the balance.

My abode of virtue is filled with furniture from the vintage of the early forties and I sit in it alone and am so pathetically good, that I am begining to suspect myself.

You know I was born when I was very young and have been desperately tidy about my morals ever since, but for fear of stumbling just because I'm so bored I have entrenched myself behind a maddening routine. Six months here ought to put ballast into the brain of the silliest.

I think that marriage has become a social atrophy, and I never want to be guilty of irrevocably skewering two hearts together.

I fear myself only when I'm bored. Eve never would have flirted with the snake if Adam hadn't got on her nerves. I always could resist everything but temptation.

Bern once told me that every married man ought to be made to run after his wife. And I told him he'd be out of breath most of the time if he tied up with me.

I went to church Sunday and the funny man at the head of the table said he was going round to view the ruins in the afternoon. Father Time, who sits opposite me and mows down the food said, "Every stylish woman I see, I know she's getting a divorce and I can't understand it, as most of them are good look-

ing." I answered "You didn't see the other half."

I am not going to correspond with Bern as our mail might be intercepted. For although I'm passing through the mournful ceremony of losing my husband in South Dakota, I don't want to gather too much dust on my skirts on the way to the funeral. We send each other registered letters every day—but that's different—nobody could possibly get those.

There is a woman here who does a queer, pretty sort of embroidery. And she said this morning with unquenchable urbanity, "I will learn you how to do shadow work." Now Bern and I have been busy on all sorts of shadow work for the past four years in New York, but this is a different pattern. Sioux Falls is plethoric of widows and when one

is freed, the other convicts writhe under the burden of their stripes. Dearie, won't you drop in and try to quiet my dressmaker? She is beginning to show evidences of dissatisfaction—inscrutable sign-manual of finances at low tide. I'm not rich but I'm sweet and clean—did I hear two dollars and a dish of cherries?

I have bought a calendar with the dates on a block of pages—one page for each day, just for the joy of tearing them off with a vim every twenty-four hours. Sometimes I allow two days to pass, then I do a war dance like a Sioux, wild at the opportunity of pulling off a couple at a time.

There is a N. Y. Central time table on my desk and I am eternally looking up train connections until I feel like a bureau of information. I have enough money to get back on,

tucked away in my stocking. And if I have to take in washing I won't touch it. Funds are getting very low so I've started writing short stories again but "like" usual, publishers don't seem to recognize a genius and my P. O. box is always filled with long yellow comebacks—slip enclosed "Sorry we find your valuable Mss. unavailable for our publication, etc." However, nothing beats trying but failure. And although everything on this mud ball looks inky, and I am once more Past Grand Master of Hoodoo Philosophy, I shall grit my teeth and push ahead as I have done a thousand times before. My debts are growing like a snow ball and although I am not entirely broke, I am so badly bent that it ceases to be funny. There isn't a blooded dog here except the ones we Easterners bring. The Sioux Falls dogs are like the

people—you can't tell exactly what breed they are, but as a few of the N. Y. lawyers and doctors and a few of the N. Y. dogs have remained here, we hope for a better blending in the next litter.

There is an Englishman here who calls himself "Chappie" but "Baw Jove" he never saw the other side of the Atlantic if I am any judge. But you can hand these people any sort of pill and they'll swallow it without making a face. We have no indigestible pleasures here, but the food. I am suffering from gastric nostalgia. I was so hungry for something sharp and sour last night that I bought a bottle of horse-radish and ate it in cold blood. Today my digestive apparatus is slumped and I feel like the ragged edge of a misspent career.

Every night the man in the next room,

treats himself to a skin full and comes home so pleasantly lit up that he has to be put to bed. Last night he must have drunk like the sands of the desert, for he was a bit more tipsy than ever and flung apologies and hiccoughs over my transom.

I look back upon my old life as an impression received in the dawn, and already it seems but a level highroad on a gray day. Marriage laws were made by old maids—any one can see that. And they have decreed that conjugal love, apart from passion, is elevating and a woman in yielding herself may evict the sanctum of love if the man may legally call her his own. It's all wrong dear—woman has been sacrificed to the family. And what a degrading imitation of Nature to propagate the species. How glorious never again to be shod in the slippers of matrimony—I

seem to demand the advantages of marriage with none of the drawbacks.

To return to things less serious, Othello hates something about my new combination lingerie and barks like fury when I put it on—maybe it is the blue ribbon—I'll try a dash of lavender tomorrow.

You will agree that my *geistes ab vesend* has reached an alarming degree when I tell you that this A. M. after my tub, I liberally dashed tooth powder all over my body instead of talcum.

My affection is all for you—for the opposite sex it seems to have grown as cold as a raked-out oven.

Goodnight,
MARIANNE.

September 21.

Most Precious Lorna:

I am excited—excited—from the bottom lift on my French heels to the top hair on my golden puffs.

Now who would have thought that the "Fate Sisters" would discover me way out here and sit on the corner of Minnesota and 12th spinning their breakable yarn.

Well—well—yesterday the one with the weary look and the crooked nose, got a knot in her twine and this is how it happened. I was crossing this Minnie-something street, when a shrill siren and the cannonade of a powerful exhaust warned me to stay my tootsies. I wasn't looking for a big white aseptic machine out here or any other kind, so the

blooming thing crashed into us and rather than have Bunky hurt, I ran the risk (not quite, but nearly) of losing my life, but not until I had assured myself that the man at the wheel was exotic to this soil.

Zip-bang-gasoline-smoke! and I was fished out, laid tenderly on the back seat and rushed to a druggery. I allowed the dramatic spirits of pneumonia to be forced down my throat by his manicured hands and somehow I couldn't find the courage to take my head away from his shoulder—it was such a comfy, tailored Fifth Avenue shoulder. You know my reputation—30 years in a circus and never lost a spangle.

What is it that the Christian Scientists have on their souvenir spoons: "There is no life in matter?"—well old girl I can sign a testimonial to the opposite. Poor little Bunky

added one more knot to his tail during the mix-up, but as every knot is worth twenty-four dollars on a French bull pup's tail, I don't mind this acquisition.

I was asked the other day if Bunk was a Pomeranian and I said, "No, a French bull pup." The woman answered, "That's the same thing, isn't it?"

Finally with a little home-made sob I opened my eyes and asked the same question that Eve put to Adam the morning after God had presented him with that poisonous bon-bon. "Where am I?" and it's none of your inquisitive business what he answered. The white auto will call tonight to see of I'm still living and meantime I have ordered fifty yards of white dabby stuff from "Fantles" to keep busy on. No—not a trousseau—I shall never—never marry again—I'm too full of experience.

I told the white auto that I had been hemmed in so long that I did not know how to act in decent society any more and he said he's the best hem-ripper that ever lived, so I think I'll take a chance. Isn't there a great difference in men, dear? But, in husbands—they vary only in the color of their hair.

I'm so glad motors stand without hitching. Now you'll say "Can't you leave men alone for six months?" Sometimes my conscience does get feverish and bothers me, but it's so seldom that I am grateful for the change as it acts as a stimulation to my gray matter—whatever that is.

My honest intentions were to leave off my puffs and artificials while here, just to give Nature a chance, but now that I have been run over by an auto I consider the plan inadvisable.

There are dandy golf links here but they don't allow "Divorsays" on the ground. The Sioux Falls women, (cats for short) had it stopped three years ago, because they were all neglected when any number of my tribe appeared.

Not a soul knows what I'm here for. One must never tell. That's the first divorce colony by-law. I have become a perfect diplomat and know how to keep still in three languages. I just casually told my troubles to the boarding house keeper and her daughters, but they don't count, as they are such dears, and it won't go any further.

As long as I live, my attorney says, I must sign in hotel registers from Sioux Falls—If I do the clerks will stoop to pick cockle burrs and tumble weeds off my skirts and help me to loosen my Indian wampum—whatever that is.

Father Time, whom I mentioned in my last and who possesses as much energy for getting divorces (this being his third time on earth) as Roosevelt exhibits in the Baby market, has taken to peddling "The Ladies Home Journal," and the "Saturday Evening Post," and if you only knew how cunning he looks with his abbreviated coat and short,quick, little steps, you would give a dollar for a picture of him to paste in your book of curiosities of the world.

Court was in session last week and all sorts of real Indians paraded the streets. They weren't like our dear old Irish Indians on Manhattan Island, who perambulate inside little houses placarded with one night corn cures; these were the real article and their wives walked behind, just like New York wives, carrying an orphan asylum on their

backs and provisions for the week on their hips.

Poor down trodden creatures. I feel like organizing a class to show them how to *marcelle* their mops and "straight front" their stomachs. A tommyhawk for me and no mop to *marcelle* if I try to revolutionize Indiandom.

Last night at a wonderful performance of Fiske in "Rosmerholm," the house was packed with Indians and in the ghostly part where everybody throws himself into the mill-stream, Squaw Sloppy-Closey and Chief Many-Licey opened soda pop and passed it to each other for a drink out of the same bottle. Poor Fiske was horrified and threatened to stop the performance if the soda pop artillery didn't cease its bombarding.

The wind tears around the corner of my

room on the bias and the cats keep up a Thomas Concert beneath my windows all night long. No wonder I have nightmares. Last night I dreamed that I was a saint with an apple pie for a halo—this boarding house pie habit will eventually tell on the strongest nerves.

Last night I cut my leg on a barbed wire—no dear I wasn't hurdling the fence—the wire was on the side walk, where everything except the kitchen stove usually lies. I hope I won't have lockjaw—it's harder on a woman than it is on a man anytime. I was just thinking how clever it would be, if a man who had a chattering wife, would keep a bunch of rusty pins on hand.

I sat down to the piano this morning and ran through that pyrotechnical *Solfigetto* by the other Bach, and Father Time, who sat enchanted, said, "You and the piano has met

before." It's a shame to cheat the aged.

Thank heaven that the sunshine is free and that the florist's window is gratis to look at, otherwise on my slender means I should have to take advantage of the bankrupt law.

My old friend Insomnia again stands incessantly at the foot of my bed and bids me corner the sunrise market. A heavy heart is mine tonight and though I try to fancy beautiful pictures in the crystal ball of the future, I grow sick with anticipation as the visions fall away before they are half formed, leaving me melancholy and wondering if there is an angel somewhere who collects the sighs of such ever-repressed feeling.

Goodnight,
MARIANNE.

October 5.

Lorna Dear:

Well, Lorna, you and I were "all day suckers" to believe that Mrs. Phyllis Lathrop was touring California; I bumped plump into her yesterday in front of the poor-house. No, dear, I did not go there to stay, merely to visit. Phyllis is nice in her red-headed way and looked very fresh and sweet with the lower part of her face lost in a tulle abyss. She lives just a whisper away from me—so strange I haven't seen her before. She's trotting around with a Sioux Falls fellow who looks like a Dutch luncheon favor. Every time he lifts his hat I look for bon-bons to drop out. Says she must be loving someone all the time, even if she is considered in the

light of an accommodation train. She's the unfinished sort of a woman who carries her beauty around in little tubes and seems so used to audiences that I always feel that she must have sung between the acts.

Town Topics said something about "The soft breezes of California restoring the bloom to Phyllis' cheeks"—to think that *T. Ts* got fogged in the matter is consoling to such lesser lights as you and I. You can take it from me, "the soft breezes of California" are blowing into her room in a nearby Sioux Falls boarding house, but instead of being laden with the scent of flowers they are redolent of hash from the cookery. I'll take off my hat to her. She was a slick duck. Of course she denied nothing to me—her time is up soon; then she will lay her history before the Judge, who is always busy picking hairs from his

coat and doing other things of vital import while you pour out your heart's woes.

The fellow whose motor sent me to the brink of the Styx, is now preparing me by night light to take the 33d degree of happiness. You have heard of him I know, Carlton Somerville, the Wall Street broker. I forget what it was his wife did that got on his nerves, but anyway he too is hibernating in Sioux Falls clay. We have gotten "First-namey" and have frankly decided that in order to keep our cleverness from dying of inanition, we will practice on each other.

How could you, my dearest friend, accuse me of being forgetful of Bern? He wouldn't appreciate me at all if I forgot how. And really six months of non-practice would be ruination.

Carlton has fallen in love over his depth

with that beefy Mrs. Claymore and takes me motoring to pour his love (of her) into my aural labyrinths. I don't object to playing second fiddle, but when it comes to holding the triangle for the drummer, I pass blind. Never mind, while he isn't watching some day he'll get stung, for I'm really fond of him. You say that you are so much stronger willed than I am—did you ever look at yourself in the mirror? Carlton has eyes that I adore—they are the deeply sad sort that would make one think that love had passed that way. If it really hasn't, he might as well begin to put up the grand stand and have the tickets printed. My dear, I'd never marry another man with a memory—most inconvenient asset that a husband can possess.

"Chappie," the Englishman, has started a society paper—sort of six months gestation of

Town Topics, so Carlton and I are batting around after midnight, so "we won't become saw." There are all sorts of ways to make a bee buzz. Do keep Bern from wearing red ties while I'm gone and give him a shove along the straight and narrow, once and so often.

After a month and a half of drinking Sioux Falls water, I would bring a higher price as a lime kiln than I would in the woman market. One's pelt gets wind tanned and such a thing as a daintily flushed face is as unlooked for out here as consideration from the natives.

My head ached so yesterday that I called on a doctor, "Visit including all medicine, one dollar." Isn't it "patetic?" He raved about the climate and said he brought his wife here with T. B., and she improved so much. Naturally I asked, "How is she now?" He said,

"O, she's dead." Don't blame him for raving about the climate, do you?

My dear it is worth a trip out here to see a whist party "let out." No, not "bridge,"—they haven't heard of it yet—just plain whist; but as I was saying, to see one turn out with its white alpaca skirt and blue satin ribbon belt. I've paid two dollars at Hammerstein's to see things not half so funny. O, for a sip of Fleischman's coffee—there are grounds for divorce in every cup out here. The butter we eat, walks in from the country alone, and at every meal we get smashed potatoes piled as high as the snow on the Alps. I can't look a potato in the eye any more.

There is a couple here on business from Michigan,—a Mr. and Mrs. Jones, odd name that. Isn't it sad that they are so happily married, they might both be getting divorces,

but as it is they are simply wasting a year out here for nothing. I passed the Judge on the street this morning and I was so nervous that I walked bow-legged. But thanks to *skirts et cetera-et cetera.*

I have sampled all the churches and have finally landed at the Christian Science house of worship, as I would rather any day hear a pianola grind out its *papier mache* music than listen to a poor performer.

If I had Carnegie's millions, I'd go straight to Chicago, buy a big, fat, thick, beef steak, step into the middle of it and eat my way out. I'm hungry, hungry. I worry down the "dope" that they deal out in the dining room, then go back to my sanctum and finish on limey water and cracknells—you know what they are, a powdery sort of counterfeit cake that chokes you to

death if you happen to breathe while you're chewing it.

Last night while trying to cut some stringy roast beef and still retain my dignity, the man with the red tie said: "Put your other foot on it." I'm afraid if I don't eat potatoes again, my stomach will shrivel so that I will never be able to sit through a course dinner when I get back. Potatoes distend it all right—I feel like I have swallowed one wing of Fleischman's yeast factory whenever I eat them. You have to come down on the meat with such force to make any impression on it, that more gets pushed up between your teeth than goes down your alimentary canal; then you spend the balance of the night squandering Japanese dental floss. I unconciously finish my prayers with "Lord preserve us from the

holy trinity of roast beef, roast mutton and roast pork."

You can recognise one of the clan in a moment by what is known as the "Divorsay jaw." No feek and weeble expression on our faces but "Do or die" is the look we have in our optics.

Every time I go to church I vow I'll never go again. The organ is asthmatic and the wheezing gets on my gray matter.

The Judge has begun to wear a fur coat—Dakota cow fur, I think, and he looks for all the world like a turkey gobbler in distress.

I sleep on what they call here a "sanitary couch." Can't fathom the mystery of the name, for mine is so chucked with dust that I dream I'm in a sand storm crossing the Sahara, and when I awaken my sympathies are keen with the camel.

There's a new boarder here whose face looks like a chapel and every time she opens her mouth you're afraid it's going to be the Lord's Prayer. She wears a wide ruching which makes her look excited; distributes tracts, and can't see a joke. She says she's Miss and leaves envelopes around with "Mrs." written on them in red ink—modest writing fluid I've always considered it.

Will you buy me some new puffs? Mine are all ratty and I feel bare-footed without them. Enclosed is a clipping from my hair. Read it carefully. False hair is no crime as long as it matches—like that German song that says "Kissing is no sin with a pretty woman."

Have you caught "Three Weeks" yet? I had a violent attack a few days ago. Cured it with a small dose of Christian

Science before meals and some of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* which I shook well after using.

You can imagine what disastrous effect Eleanor Glynn's book had on the "Divorce Colony." We all bunched together and said "What's the use," and if it hadn't been for the old man who eats his soup out loud, we would have bolted in a mass to suggest "Free Love" to our respective "Fiascos"—Dakota's past tense for "Fiance."

I long so to flash my calciums on a Fifth Ave. stroller that I'd flirt with God if I met him.

I close dear with a sigh over my chin, which is getting triple (an invention of the devil).

Auf wiedersehen,

MARIANNE.

October 25.

My Dear:

I've changed lodgings and before I took the new chambers, I inquired of the landlady if there was any electricity in the house and she answered "Yes," so today I asked here where it was, and she pointed to the telephone. O, me! O, my! this life is wearing me to a fraz!

Last week the autumn leaves fell and in order to show Mrs. Judge how simple and near to nature I live, I raked their lawn, and ours, clean, and stood long after dark making huge bonfires on a line with the sidewalk. But lo! the fleas that were of the earth became the fleas of me and I have occupied most of my time since scratching.

But anything to pass the hours away.

Our hedges are cut for the last time this fall, and look as though they are fresh from the barber. Isn't that phrase "for the last time" the most desolate utterance that a human voice can make? It goes thundering down the aisles of time only to be lost in the arcana of treacherous memory. To dream for the last time—to love for the last time—bitter contemplation—funereal introspection.

I am suffering from acute nostalgia—by this time you are standing in the gun-room at Keith Lodge, drinking your first. I can hear Duncan ask: "Scotch or Irish," and see you tip it off with Blake and the rest. No bridge for you tonight—early to bed and tomorrow morning you'll all start out in your natty knickers and short kilts to mur-

der things that will fall in bloody feathery heaps at your feet. Native woodcock, jack snipe, black mallard, grouse, etc., the restless eager setters doing their own retrieving; the soft dank ground daintily overspread with the frond of marvelous fern like my window pane this morning with its delicate tracery in frost; the tall-stemmed alders echoing your shots to skyward; the big dense timber with its springy ground all saturated with the fragrance of the mounting sea: I seem like something dead whispering to you from the tomb. Nothing lasts longer than twenty-four hours in New York —not even a memory, so no one misses me. It's another of God's jollies and I know I'm ungrateful dear, for you are thinking of me I know, with my dear old "Sport" ready to point for you tomorrow, just to

receive your pats of recognition and thanks. My feelings are worn into meaningless smoothness like the head on an old coin, and because I have added my quota of absurdity to the morning papers I am no longer interesting. But, pshaw! one can't buy cocaine for a nickel, and as I could live extravagantly on the interest of my debts, I haven't more than five cents to invest.

Don't mind this slump in grit—it will return to par and slang tomorrow. Keep a record of all you do to send to me, and above all—win the cup. With whom are you shooting?

I will now stuff the cracks of my door with medicated cotton, open the portholes and smoke my cigarette alone—Lord preserve me, if anybody knew! See if you can't get the Humane Society to form a branch

out here to feed and water the widows.

I have just returned from a little walk with Carlton—I suppose my eyes prattled, for he smiled at me through his wrinkles and was rather more thoughtful of my comforts than usual. His *Insouciance* is charming and always turns the tide of my melancholy. He is the only man who ever ventured to stand on my tack and take me broadsides. We have framed up a little Bacchic plot to be enacted on our way back from the Post where I shall soon meander to mail this on the late Rock Island.

I am certainly in love, because I know the symptoms, but I can't tell with whom. some temperature, high pulse and strange flutterings—but who is the victim? Bern or Howard in New York or Carlton here? The thought of all of them stirs me, so how

am I to know which is in the lead? Hope the period of incubation will soon be over and the blooming thing assert itself. I have often been vaccinated and the thing always takes, but still I am not immune and never will be until I am six feet under, even if I live to be an hundred years old! Did you catch the an? But it's disgusting not to know whether it is the measles or something worse, however I am taking all precautions and awaiting developments.

I often wonder what I'll do with my decree when I get it—I can't wear it on my finger, and it certainly isn't the thing for gold leaf and a shadow box—Oh! I shan't waste time placing it; perhaps Carlton will find a pigeon-hole for it somewhere.

I haven't written to Bern in days, but I don't care; I never considered a banker as

one of the human race, anyway. Poor Bern; he's thrown out like a bill in Parliament! Beaten by a blackball called Carlton—I'd hate to see him now. Roland the Furious is charming in a poem, but in a drawing room, prosaic and expensive.

Carlton and I went to church Sunday and were refused communion—the dear good Bishop has but one eye, so he sees things half way. I said: "If this is God's table, I want communion, if it's the Episcopal, I don't." In his sermon he called divorcees "social lepers, social filthiness," and said: "After the new law goes into effect, we'll have no more dumping here." He's an old pop-gun that shoots spit-balls, so the wounds he makes are not fatal. Carlton refuses to go to church here or anywhere else again, and will once more trudge

along his Sunday field of Bacchus cultivated by Venus.

By the way, after June 1st, all divorcees will be required to stay one year, then they won't come at all. Oklahoma had a hunch and changed her law back to three months. Now the colony will transplant itself, then watch the death agony of Sioux Falls. She's foolish—foolish! The Easterners have made this burg what it is. Take away our influence and she'll sink into nothingness again. Some of us are bad, but all of us are not; however, the Sioux Falls gossips make no distinction. They lift their $2.98 skirts when they pass us, for fear of inoculation by the *bacillus* divorce. I often wonder if they realize that the prejudice is returned with compound interest.

When any new gossip is born, they fly

around the streets like the beads of a rosary when the string is snapped. Perhaps you haven't noticed how serious this letter is. I'm frowning as I write—a habit most bad on the eyebrows—surest of signs that I am sinking again into the quagmire of love.

I have felt my pulse so often and know all the symptoms—which I more than enjoy scrutinizing—not even the finest emotion escapes me. I believe that I play the game well for I am still unjaded, which is unusual with so much over-feeding.

Is your new fur coat unborn lamb, or did it happen? Speaking of possessions—my appendix still gives me ample proof of its constancy. The blue devils are chasing me today and I am wearing the expression that sits on the lips of every portrait in every exhibition. I smile to keep from crying,

because if I cry—I'm lost!

As I am of the experienced elite of society that sups, I must bid you adieu—I promise more jocosity in my next.

Affy,

MARIANNE.

December 1.

Since writing you I have heard the turkey gobbler say his last prayer and have had a coming out party for "Penny," short for appendix. The receiving party was comprised of two eminent surgeons, two trained nurses, who served adhesive plaster and instruments, and an "etherist" who poured. Costumes were uniformly white with great profusion of gauze trimmings, with which I also eventually became somewhat decorated. One of the internes wasn't half bad, so I kept the nurse busy combing my adopted hair and pinning it on becomingly. It is a much quicker and easier process to have your appendix cut out than your husband.

I was away four weeks and am now back in Sioux and well taken care of by my landlady, whose hair and face disagree as to age. My walls are hung with ten-cent store art, and if I were not awfully strong-minded I could not overcome the effect.

The white auto called last night, and as my head rested on his shoulder our conversation was the rambling sort that may be ticketed "all rights reserved," so I won't repeat it as the postmaster-general would refuse me stamps in the future if I sent it through the mail. In Chicago they'd take out my phone if I squeaked it over the wires. Carlton is deeply interested in some mines out here—spinach mines I think. I made up my mind to something last night—I am determined to get him away from that carrotty giraffe whom he used to believe he

loved. If in my convalescent state I am unable to arouse his sympathy, I'll relapse into white muslin emotions and thereby gain my end. I am made from dust and the slightest rustle from the right man's coat can blow me whithersoever it willeth. You know I am a spoiled child who has had everything it wanted, so bon-bons no longer excite me. Carlton is so thin that you can see daylight through his lattice work, and cold as paving stone in winter. He's a real "millionery." but his cash is 40 degrees below, so I am determined to warm up his eagles and teach them to fly. I am going to touch that cash box under his left breast and show him that the devil has a sister. The man wants bleeding—he has too many bank notes in his veins. He seems to be toppling so I might as well register him in

my "Book of Mistakes."

Do you know that I still keep a record of these undying passions of mine with a picture of each culprit attached, and Carlton is 999. I thought, when I was sixteen, I would record the one divine fire that was like to consume me, and now I have eighteen volumes of this 105-degrees-in-the-shade literature, all bound alike in a perfect *edition de luxe.* I'd rather regret what I have done than what I have not done. You dear old ostrich, I can hear you sigh over me, but don't you waste your gasoline. You, too, should have callouses on your emotions by this time.

Bunky and Othello have both decided to bark at my chemiselets and skirtlets in one, —maybe they think they are too flossy to be concealed. I agree there.

Phyllis Lathop's lawyer, Mr. Maryan Soe Early, got her decree for her last week and she flew back on the 3.30 train to Manhattan and Gordon Booth. Of course everyone knows that he is booked.

Her plea was extreme cruelty; said her husband struck her. The dear old judge asked her to explain in detail some of the circumstances of her husband's brutality. She said: "While crossing Lake Michigan there was a terrible storm on, and as my husband was descending from the upper berth, the boat lurched and he struck me with his elbow." Phyllis said the judge smiled very broadly and gave her her decree on "Extreme Nerve," instead of "Extreme Cruelty."

She writes that she and Gordon are having such times together—batting around

their old stamping ground, Bronx Park—strange how hard it is to overcome habits. They slink off to the New York woman's trysting place when there is no longer any reason for secrecy. One bitter cold day last winter Bern and I met Phyllis and Gordon in the very spot that we always frequented, and poor individuals were stamping their feet to keep them from freezing. The monkey house was full of people and they dared not remain there any longer. We all smiled as much as to say: "You don't tell, and I certainly won't." Not a word ever came out, so the treaty was well kept. Bern and I were more or less engaged at the time.

We laughed over it when she was out here, and I asked her why she never repeated it, as she never keeps anything to

her gossipy self. She answered: "If I had said that I had seen you there, I would have had to explain my own presence in the park, and I never incriminate myself." She says that "there are two new kinds of monkeys out there and one looks like Elbert Hubbard—sits all day surrounded by his hair."

She's running a bar in connection with her tea table now, which is equivalent to putting salt on the tail of the social male bird. She can hardly believe that she's free, and says that it will take some time for her to realize "that there aint no beast." Isn't it strange that the most fascinating lover in the world can turn into the veriest beast within six months after he has hit you on the head and dragged you senseless into his Fifth Avenue home? Of course you're senseless or you would not have tied up.

Phyllis says that she has gotten out of the habit of decent food, that every time she really dines, she gets strange pains in her underneath. I wish I could fly back home, but I must grit my teeth and get rid of my beast too. I wonder which breed I'll try next time. Boston Bull, I suppose, I think that's where Carlton was first kenneled.

I have a large stove in my sitting-room and keep it going myself. Othello looks as though he'd laugh himself to death every time I put coal on—darn his pelt! He's crazy over Sioux Falls—possibly because there are seven dogs to the city block. He goes away on bridal tours every few days and then I have to get out a search warrant. I could live quite decently if I did not have to invest in so many rewards for him.

It is so terribly cold here that my very

thoughts are frozen and my hot-water bag does nightly service. The thing sprung a leak last week and I took it to a garage to ask if they would mend it, and the fellow answered: "Certainly, madam, we have quite a trade in hot-water bottles and "nature's rivals." I have also found out that the only place to buy burnt wood is at Mr. Trepaning's the undertaker and embalmer.

All the stiff and crackling branches of the trees are weighted down with a three-inch ruching of snow. It is all silently fascinating, especially so because since starting this letter two short raps at my window announce Carlton who comes each night to accompany me to the late post after the landlady is snoozing. His arms are around me as I scrawl, and the thousand tiny little thrills that answer so eagerly to his near-

ness ,assure me that it is not deplorable to be thirty-nine.

Good night,

MARIANNE.

December 20.

So near Xmas, dear, yet none of the Yuletide joys float out to this frozen wilderness. Snow, snow everywhere. The tall alders, whose vivid coloring so inspired me when I arrived, are now black and gaunt, and the pitiless desert wind comes tearing and howling from the north to bend and crack their stiffened joints. I often wonder—am I any more the arbiter of my fate than these lifeless snow-draped spectres around me.

Carlton left the hotel almost a week ago and took the room next to mine. We are hopelessly in love with each other, and he wonders how he ever could have thought of accepting happiness from Mrs. Claymore, accompanied by so many freckles and a half million dollars.

As for Bern, dear, he will survive. I am much older than he is, so that some day he would be forty with all his emotions and I would be fifty with the rheumatism—it would never do. Henceforth I shall be prodigal of negatives, except where Carlton is concerned.

We have attained the intimacy which thinks aloud, and instead of hating Sioux Falls and longing for my sentence to expire, I am beginning to worship every inch of the ground, and only pray that such an exile should last forever.

None of the fulminating fires that I have heretofore known are mine—only calm and peace and the joys born of a perfect understanding. We have not let the moment slip when souls meet in comprehension. I almost decided not to confide all this to you,

but it slipped off my pen and I'm not sorry, for no woman living was ever before blessed with a friend like you. You and I have visited the lowest Dantesque circles of despair together, and no confidence between us could amount to an indiscretion.

Our landlady thinks that we are merely speaking acquaintances, and it is best, as this new-found sympathy must not be distilled by Sioux Falls scandal-mongers, though I should like to shout it from the house tops through a megaphone, I am so happy and proud of it.

So you shot with Aldrich and he tried to get you to buy "Steel Preferred." I am glad you did not invest and sorry you did not win the cup. I shall never again shoot for pleasure. I am ashamed of my trophies. Perhaps love has made me mushy but I

don't regret it as hate made me flinty. Have you noticed how our bonds have slumped—the whole thing was a Golden Fleece. Commercialism bores me to extinction. I suppose the world began with trade, since Adam sold Paradise for a pippin.

Are you still of the opinion that tradespeople should be branded on the forehead down to the third generation?—you dear snobbish treasure.

Henceforth I shall only deal in sentimental tramways and have shares in the moral funds—maybe not moral according to the threadbare ideal of the genus *homo sapiens.*

Surprising that a girl as young as Alice Noah—no relation to the fellow who built the ark—should just take out legal separation papers in New York. How can the

modus vivendi suit her better than divorce? Perhaps she wants to cinch her alimony until she finds another affinity. Then Alice for Dakota. It is foolish to cut your financial string when you might just as well dangle, especially until you find something worth dropping for.

Dear, will you please send me a reel of Sirdars? I can't smoke anything else and no one sells them out here. Our landlady has one eye that looks up the chimney and another that goes cellar wards and Carlton says that she always regards him obliquely—never mind, she is is a good stupid soul and I can forgive a landlady anything but perspicacity. I don't see how our intimacy has escaped her,—to me it looks like the first foreign sticker on an American five dollar dress suit case.

Why do you write such short letters? Is it because you have but a limited number of ideas and must dispense them carefully?

What did Philip Leighton die of? His wife, I suppose. They never had anything in common but the kiddies. That means no more hunts at Blackburn Heath unless someone careless like Philip absorbs the estate. Mrs. Philip was a Pennsylvania girl. *N'est ce pas?* That accounts for her effulgent spontaneity. Isn't it a shame for me to wax bombastic over a girl who, if she were just a little brighter, might be called half witted. She's the girl with the massive mother, who suffers from dislocated adjectives. They say when she was married her prayer book was missing, so she carried a cake of ivory soap instead—The mother was divorced and could have had alimony if she

had wanted it, but she had better sense than to want it. She has venomous optics—the fellows used to say they flew when she flashed her calciums; ugly as the seven deadly sins and so mannish that I was always afraid her trousers would show beneath her petticoats. The giddy old cat! If she had been hanging since her sixtieth birthday, she would certainly be breathless now.

All day, dear, I go about my duties with a most ladylike absence of passion, but when night comes I cross the sandy waste of the past and stretch out my hands to fondle the idea of perfect companionship. Our thoughts seem to be a reverberation of the same thunderous roll, and while they are not identical, they are of the same breadth and elevation. The conditions of propinquity are responsible; and as love did not

come to me, I had to do as Mahomet did with the mountain.

When he goes from me, Joy vanishes, but leaves a bright track of light behind, which bursts upon me through the clouds of cigarette smoke that he has left.

Each day I awaken more warmed and thrilled, like the sun which finds the mountain tops that he touched with his departing rays still warm when he sends his shaft of light in the morn.

No maelstrom of distrust do we feel, only a mighty, overpowering passion that no undress of intimacy can ever destroy.

Good-night, friend of my babyhood, my girlhood, my womanhood. My greetings for your birthday.

Affy,
MARIANNE.

February 10.

Don't be cross with me, dear, I am in no danger. Your repeated letters came—I read them, then straightway forgot that they should be answered. It is no evidence of a lessening of my love for you, but because life has become so mysteriously perfect for me that I dream away my hours.

One night, seemingly a million years ago, but really only within the present week, I felt cold as I stood by my stove and plaited my hair—I have nice hair, Lorna, haven't I? But I didn't seem to notice it. I was in my nightie and I shivered. My white chiffon bedspread with the pink roses strewn over it was near, so I drew it close about me and felt that I had protected myself from the chill. It wasn't an external

chill that made me quake, but something old and deep-rooted and lonely that came from the depths of the soul in me and begged and pleaded for recognition.

The big stove with its dozens of mica eyes threw out comforting little rays of coziness, but the real me still shivered. I walked to the window and opened it. Strange, disquieting, but gracious thoughts that I had lost somewhere in the twilight of the night before, came riding back to me on a snow flurry—it was so still that I feared to breathe, lest I disturb the solitude—the sky wasn't heavy and gray, but clear and blue and seemed like a soft silken canopy that the gaunt maples upheld to protect me and my love, and the virgin snow that fell on my outstretched arms in soft little rosettes that disappeared as our loves some-

times do when they have but let us feel the deliciousness of their possession.

The heavy old door between my room and his creaked with rustiness and age, as for the first time in years it turned upon its hinges. Carlton had watched for my last good-night signal and grew alarmed at its absence and my quietude.

I wonder why I didn't feel embarassed—all I know is that after he discovered a comfortable angle in my Morris, I crawled into his arms and lay there quietly without a word until dawn the next morning. Our sleep was rhythmic, just like our love. What a strange beautiful night we passed and how difficult it would be to make the world believe!

Awakening, I felt something cold around my neck, and there, dear girl, he had fas-

tened pearls while I slept in his arms. I cannot even imagine their value, as I know nothing of jewels but how to accept and wear them.

Such a gift is wonderful at any time, but how much more subtly charming to have it fastened on you as you lay, comfy and subconscious in his strong and doubtless aching arms. Such peace, peace, dear, would have benumbed Napoleon; but I need few other interests—my universe begins at his head and ends at his feet.

This is the purest jag of joy that I have ever been on in my life, and I wonder that one small blonde woman is able to allow herself so much spark and not have her engines explode.

I always fancied that I should die if such an ideal existence even attempted to show

its face to me; and instead, I take my soup before it's cold, put my shoes on my feet, my hat on my head, retire and arise at the usual hours.

He embroiders his talk with bungalows, steam yachts and motor cars for the future, while I fear to buy a pair of boots before a consultation with my trousers pocket. I find myself imprisoned in a banker's portfolio, floundering in statements covered with red ink. He doesn't dream that such is the case, or all his funds would be at my disposal. Somehow, if I had my decree, I should tell him; but while I am still someone's else wife I cannot take his money—it would soil my emotions.

Yesterday, while opening a crate for me, he cut his finger very badly, and as I bound it up he said, "Forgive me," and concealing

his hurt, he sought pardon for the pain he had caused me.

His feelings are intuitively charming, and though he hasn't a university education, he has a universal one, which counts for far more in this world where a stab is given in return for a pin prick.

Good-night, precious girl-woman, whose friendship has never failed me, whose love has been the most uplifting emotion that I have ever known.

MARIANNE.

March 3.

Lorna Mine:

My six months were up on March first, but as the judge hates undue haste about serving papers, I waited one whole hour before I shot mine off to New York. I am no longer doing time, but am a full-fledged citizen of South Dakota. Isn't it nice that my case won't have a jury—it always gets hung and it sounds unpleasant even if it really isn't.

Oh! these dazzlingly cool, fresh, spring days. If there is anything more beautiful in the West than their gaudy Indian summer, it is the half scared spring. The wind is a bit blustery and pretentious, but otherwise Nature seems doubtful as to whether she will paint her landscape or not. Each

night a grand sunset crowns the close of a cloudless day.

Weeks ago Carlton's decree was granted him, but he stays to hold me in his arms while I wait for mine. You ask if we are engaged? Yes—awfully engaged all the time.

I have never before been able to understand why people put such vast sums in churches. Now I know. It isn't on account of the worship, nor of the interior, but for the steps. When you take into consideration what assistance they have rendered lovers, it only seems just that they should be taxed. We worship at Christian Science Church, because it's darker, every night except Wednesday; but they have some sort of a shin-dig then, so we switch to the Episcopal and take communion with each other.

Nice clean, comfy, red granite steps that so many pious, divorce-hating feet have passed over. My sympathies go out to all women, even if they are fallen and so did Christ's; but the good Sioux Fallians are above it. They pull all the hay to their side of the manger and forget that we, having never used such food, don't miss it now. It is a pity that we can't infuse more of the "God-honor-and-the-ladies" spirit into this depth of silliness out here.

The West is so big and glorious and free, it seems strange that the corn crop should be so superior to the people. I suppose it is because each perfect stalk of corn turns its face to God and Heaven, and the people are so busy gossiping they haven't the time to worship. When we pass them on the street we feel like saying: "Our reputations are in

your hands. In God's name be merciful!"

I am keeping house now in my room—light housekeeping, you know. It's positively airy sometimes. My landlady—bless her ignorant soul!—allows my little ice-box to remain in her butler's pantry, which I have christened "cockroach alley." They—the cockroaches—are so large and educated that I have named them, and each one comes when it's called and feeds from the hand.

She wears the most artistic skirts—always ball-room back and ballet front. Her grandchild was sitting on the floor yesterday, reading the Bible, when suddenly she looked up and said: "Grandma, there's a grammatical error in this Bible," and my landlady said: "Well, kill it, child, kill it!" She spends whole hours each day talking to

her birds, which, she claims, save the expense of a piano. I told the grandchild to go out into the sunshine this morning and it would do her cold good. She said, very saucily: "I won't go into the sunshine, my grandma told me to go into the air." My grandma didn't tell me to go there, Lorna, but someone must have ordered it, for in the "air" I am, and so high that I no longer feel the earth beneath my feet.

Thank you so much for Mr. Fitch's article. So you think that Sioux Falls is like his description of it. He came in one night and left the next morning, then wrote an article which is a gross exaggeration in every particular. In the first place there was never but one French maid here and she was Irish. It is true that some scandalous people come here, but there are also scan-

dalous residents; however, there are many more divorcees, quiet, charming and unseen, who do not fret away their six months, but spend them profitably, writing, sewing, taking care of their beloved children, *et cetera.*

The very idea of mentioning anything as incongruous as Sioux Falls and luxury in the same breath—it's a slam on luxury! Big and luxurious hotels—Mr. Fitch ought to be mobbed. Wonder if he got a whiff of the lobby of the only thing that can be called an hotel here, or if he had a cold during his prolonged stay of twelve hours, nine of which he slept through. At the hotel yesterday I mentioned to the elevator boy that many children were stopping there. He answered: "Yes, there is more children than there is guests."

That grill room that he speaks of is a dim memory; I think it lasted two months; and as it depended on divorce custom entirely, and as the main part of the colony sups in its own home, the thing fell through. And the theatres, dear, we have had two good shows since I came, otherwise "ten, twenty and thirty."

The women and preachers may be against the quick lunch method of divorce, but you can gamble on it that the business men heartily approve; and these same women and preachers will find their larders and contribution boxes but scantily filled if the odorous money of the dissolute "Divorsay" is barred.

I am all excited over the article as there is neither truth nor ruth in it, and Carlton is intensely amused, so I suppose I will not

try to fight the battles of the colony so long as I am lazy and comfortable in the arms of my love.

Had a long letter from Gretchen yesterday in which she says she enjoyed her bridal tour thoroughly, particularly at the Falls I wrote back and asked: Which?—Niagara or Sioux?"

Good-night, dearest, I close my eyes and sleep in a moment, as there are no longer any thorns to stuff my pillow.

MARIANNE.

May 2nd.

Lorna Dear:

It wasn't a bit hard to live through. The papers all came back by return mail, and all day Sunday I was in my attorney's office practising. It wasn't any more difficult than a Sunday-school lesson, and Monday morning at eight o'clock I was waiting at Liberty Hall for the hoped-for arrival of "The Greatest Common Divisor." At last he came, but with a sour expression, and not knowing what trouble he might have had before he left home, I tried to be patient.

We were ushered through the big court room into the judge's sanctum—asked how long I'd been here, and so forth and so fifth —then the comical question: "Do you ex-

pect to make Sioux Falls your home?" and the threadbare reply: "I have made no plans for the future," when all the time I had my I. C. tickets for the 3.30 train in my pocket. Do you know that was the first time I ever really perjured myself—like a lady—before, and somehow I wished awfully that I had let Carlton hold the tickets until after the trial. I couldn't even get my kerchief out of my pocketbook for fear the blooming time tables and tickets would show. Oh! the judge was terribly saccharine after he warmed up, and I adore him. Wish I had to get another divorce tomorrow—he's just like a dear old Universal Dad, and everyone loves him.

Well! dear, just to think of it. I've lost my hobbies! Isn't it great, and yet isn't it really sad! It means a failure in the great-

est undertaking of a woman's life, and it also means that I issue forth—branded. I refuse to hold post mortems and am practising loss of memory. Now for the possibilities of the future. Possibility is the biggest word in the dictionary. Isn't it strange that a woman may live apart from her husband and do atrocious things, without wearing the tell-tale letter on her bosom, yet let a virtuous woman take the step for freedom, and, alas! she carries the scar as long as she breathes. But its worth it, dear. I have thought it all over and I repeat it a thousand times, its worth it. "I have written it upon the doorposts of my house and upon my gates, and I wear it as frontlets between mine eyes"—it's worth it!

I have worn crepe for my departed vir-

tues for six years, but I throw it aside now and feel a new being whose glad unrestraint may carry her farther than she intended, just as prudery often lends a woman greater cruelty than she feels.

How clever of Don Willard to buy in Northern Pacific during the slump. He gets on with his sense of smell—he's a jackal who scents a carcass and gets there in time for a good bone.

While unpacking my trunk today I came across my wedding veil and it was all gray and dingy like the end of my honeymoon. How many sweet and tremulous illusions I folded into it on that first night and how soon afterwards did three-fourths of the world look like ashes to me. Dreams are harder to give up than realities, because they come back and gibe us even after they

are dead and buried, while tangible realities stay fairly well hidden when we screw down the lid. I suppose you think that I talk like Old Man Solomon, but you know that the only serious thoughts I have are mushrooms of one minute's gestation.

My landlady does her own washing, so I asked her if she would do mine for ample pay. She suffers so from modesty that she was hardly able to answer me, but finally said: "I would be willing to, but my husband don't improve on it." Poor creature, she has lived here all her days and is still unable to direct me to a single place—her bump of location is surely a dent.

Mrs. Judge knows the name of each member of the colony; when they came and how often they have gone away, and the Lord help you if your residence isn't right!

That's the one thing that the Judge is squeamish about, and as Mrs. Judge keeps tab for him, there is no use trying to fudge. If you don't come up before the Judge in six months and one week, she inquires of your landlady the reason for your delay. And of course the landlady knows the reason, even if you don't yourself. Every Monday afternoon Mrs. Judge drives by the I. C. station at exactly 3.25 to see which one of the widows, whose case was tried that morning, is leaving the same day. Of course they all leave unless they are prostrated with excitement. We always pack all baggage on Saturday, the dress-suit cases on Sunday, and engage the drayman on the way down to the trial Monday morning. There has never been any hitch in the arrangements, so I suppose they will remain

the same until the end of time.

You don't know what a comfort my phonograph has been to me—I would never attempt another divorce without one. The long, lonely evenings—the endless days, when time never moves off the spot, my dogs and I have sat on the floor fascinated with the greatest music in the world. I like my machine because it may be depended upon, never is nervous, and always willing to perform. Talent is so spasmodic and dependent upon moods, while the litttle hard rubber discs tirelessly and graciously amuse you.

You say that you will write more anon. I have looked in Webster and the Brittanica, as I was a bit anxious to find out just what length of time anon signifies, but I have been unsuccessful. In other words, if after

breakfast someone said to me, "You shall have more food anon," I should probably starve to death if I sat down and waited for it. Now don't be mean to me because I am in love and have neglected you. I send you thousands of messages and ask you thousands of questions each day, and simply because I don't waste time and paper in setting them down is no sign that you aren't constantly in my thoughts. Love knows no distance, and I go to you every evening for a good-night kiss just as I close my eyes to sleep, and always do I feel that you know it. There is no barrier of antagonism around you so my spirit enters where you are whenever it so desires.

You are melancholy again—how can you live in stays set with nails and maintain the grace of a dancer? It must be because of

your child. I could not do it, I'm sure—not even for my child if I had one. You are wiser than most of us fools who have choked our lives in the mud of New York. To men, dear, you are a cold Alp. Snow bound and near to heaven, impenetrable and frowning with flanks of granite, and yet beneficent. How do you accomplish it when your heart is wrung from year's end to year's end?

It must be Machiavellian foresight, precious—foresight that you alone, out of the whole set, possess. The world never forgives a failure and never forgives you for telling it the truth, and my standard is truth, as near as possible, and yours is sacrifice complete. Which is right? We shall go on begging the question until the end of time. In human transactions the law of

optics seems to be reversed—we always see indistinctly the things that are nearest to us. You have never judged, so judge me not.

MARIANNE.

The Black Hills,
September 20.

Dearest Lorna:

A thousand years ago—or maybe it wasn't so long, I can't clearly remember things any more, time isn't of any consequence, but it was the day I received my decree, and I returned my railroad tickets to the I. C. office—Carlton and I packed up some rugs, pillows and luncheon, and floated down the river to breathe confidences. Far away on the horizon was a misty hedge of cypress trees darkly traced on a canvas of lavenders and blues, overhung by extravagant yards of cloudy chiffon. Nearby the tall alders were all bent to the southward, from the bitter winds, and looked like huge giants on the march

with heavy burdens on their shoulders. They swayed at times and seemed likely to fall with their loads. On and on we floated, and on and on they marched.

The country was as tremulous as a bride, and to us nothing seemed impossible. In such magic moments when enjoyment sheds its reflection on the future the soul foresees nothing but happiness.

Toward sunset we moored our boat to a tree in a little backwater where the current was barely felt and mutely watched the changes in the great turquoise satin tent above us that seemed held aloft by the hills to shelter the landscape of barley and corn and wheat that swished and swished like feminine music of taffeta petticoats.

We felt reasons all around us why we should be happy—the trees were greens and

browns—no one like the other, blended in the harmonious colorings of an old French tapestry stolen from a deserted chateau.

All the earth seemed so sweet and so pure, and we were enjoying the world as a clean open-air playground. A few fluffy clouds began to appear, but old Boreas blew them away as soon as the west wind brought them up.

Suddenly his gaze betrayed remembrance and he drew me into his arms and our lips met. Thus we remained, languidly content, until long after the sky man had studded the heavens with millions of silver nails. And there, near a field of cattle, like Paul Potter painted, under a sky worthy of Raphael, in a cove overhung with trees like a picture by Hobbema, he asked me to be his wife. And then the sweetest ceremony

that ever was solemnized under God's loving eyes was fulfilled there in the stillness of the night. He said: "I love you," and for answer I said: "I love you too," and on my finger was placed a cool new band, which reads within: "For all eternity." As old and worldly as I am, I felt all the instinct of chastity and delicacy which is the very material of a first love. Our wedding feast was spread out in the bottom of the craft, with no effulgence of light save the reflection of God's own lanterns.

All sorts of night things chirped and sang of our joy, and trout leaped from the water in answer to the bread that I crumbled for them.

Our boat rocked and swayed as the current reached us more directly, and leaves and sticks and weeds went floating by with

turgid little whirlpools swirling aft. We were lazy lurdans, nestling there in the moonlight, but time is the precious gift of the Almighty and man may gamble it away if he chooses. Finally dawn found us floating homeward in the mists of awakening morn.

Months and months have passed since then—strange new mother instincts have arisen in my soul, and he still presses me to his heart and whispers: "For all eternity."

You could not discover my whereabouts, as I left no address in Sioux Falls. I did not want the world nor society, not even you, but just solitude—and my husband. Now we want you to know that in this beautiful wilderness we have a home—a mountain home with placid Indian servants, who glide in and out and serve noiselessly

and speechlessly: I must confess that I am only one-half brave, as the world, all but you, thinks that a minister has mumbled over us for a second time.

You are great enough to appreciate the joy we feel in cheating all humanity. Carlton has willed all of his possessions to me and to our precious little future reproduction of our love, who can but be perfect, as he is a creature of perfect conditions. We are also but half great, as it pleased us that the New York papers reported our marriage; but in our lives we are all-great and all-sufficient for each other.

Our bungalow is built in rugged, primeval "Spearfish Canon," but you may address all mail to Custer, where Carlton goes in his motor every day for things that please me.

I am so happy, so proud, so grateful that my mate is as far-seeing as I am, and we feel a mutual dread for the time when we must forsake our Black Hills for the fuller and less satisfying life in New York—but we can't play always, out here in the sunshine.

Write to me soon and forgive me for doubting that you would understand.

MARIANNE.

Black Hills,
November 25.

Dearest:

How happy your letter has made me and how slow you were in making up your mind, but I'd rather have you love me after thinking than to love me just because I'm I. Had you not understood, I should have loved you but because you understand I bow down and idolize you as I have done all my days.

Every girl deserves a mother—it is her natural heritage and Nature risks a great deal in cheating her out of her original right. I have been defrauded, but a friend like you compensates for much and is a straight gift from God and Heaven.

Carlton and I have motored over to Cus-

ter every day for your letter but not until yesterday were we recompensed for all the anxiety and doubt that I might have suffered. We read it together and I am not ashamed that our eyes were moist with joy as we drove slowly away from the little village and out into our free and glorious primevalism again. The twilight fell like a silver dust on the crests of two double rows of ancient elms in a long and lordly country road, and lighted up the sand and the drying wild grass that had waved like so many spears of gold in the sunset of a few moments before. On and on we flew—he with a trembling hand on the wheel and I with my arm around him and my lips pressing his cheek.

The rays of our acetylene lamps began to cast lurid lights before us as the darkness

thickened, just as my soul's fire is luminous now in an atmosphere ordained to bring forth all its normal glory—and all the while the back seats were empty; empty dear. Do you know the luxury of it?

We were both dreaming and praying—dreaming of a thousand more such perfect nights, praying in all our fervor and gratitude for more and yet more of our boundless and mutual passion. And then we lost our way as the machine rushed into a mystic cross-road that led due north, for the Dipper was before us. I crawled closer and closer to him until I could hear his heart pounding mercilessly as his breath came quicker and my lips pressed closer. The lamps were brilliant then and the woods and fields as silent and endless as eternity. A long snake stretched its lazy length

across our path and frogs held mute high carnival on all the little hills and bumps on the high road.

We both felt the inspiration of the moment and neither profaned it with words. As far as our lights fell three waving, nodding bands of seered grass, beckoned us on and heedless of the danger we might be rushing toward—our empassioned lips met. And like eternity the mystic course lay hidden in darkness before us, but also like the things that look most forbidding in the future, as we rushed by, the yellow hedge turned golden by our lamps, the grassy plumage rose and fell in sallow waves of approbation.

The good little people were with us (you know I believe in fairies) and the faithful engine puffed and struggled and tried its

best on the incline that we were ascending, but we were too jealous of our sensations to pay much heed to its unaided success. I would work in the fields for ten days were I sure that the eleventh night would be such another as this.

So lofty are the regions where I soar, that a fall would shiver me to atoms, but just to breathe the same air with my love lifts me to the vault of paradise. Whole hours each evening I lie on an Indian blanket in front of the open grate and dream of the legacy of love that we shall hand down to our children and our children's children until the end of time.

Ecstatically yours,
MARIANNE.

December 25.

Dearest Friend:

We are snowed in and our two bronze boys are trying to make a path to the road. We are all so abnormally well and with the nurse and Carlton's friend Dr. Harmen, constitute a lively household thought I liked the sweetness of our oneness better. These are happy times and they watch and guard me as though I were another Wilhelmina.

Was ever Christmas day so wonderful! Our tree is a real cedar of Lebanon, uprooted by our beloved Indians and decorated with their handiwork. Last eve we romped and sang and played tricks upon each other until midnight, when we saucily hung up the biggest stockings and sneaked off to bed to leave our Santa Claus with his labors.

It must have taken him hours for I slept for ages when I finally heard him getting ready for bed. I slipped into my kimono and tried to crawl down stairs and take a peep, but he heard me and would not countenance any cheating so I snuggled up again and went to sleep, but like children, we were all up at daybreak. For days and days Carlton has been going on clandestine shopping tours to the meccas around us and has kept all purchases locked and guarded. He can't bear the thought of grown-ups not loving and believing in Santa.

Aside from all the valuable and exquisite things that each received, the gift that proved Carlton's feeling toward me,—if I may insult that feeling by even suggesting the necessity of a proof—was a tiny silk

stocking, hung quite at the end of the mantel shelf, all alone as though it needed no protection, and filled with—you would never guess in a thousand years, so I shan't keep you suspended in mid air—fifty thousand dollars in U. S. bonds to start a bank account for the little visitor that is to come. Every night before we sleep, we talk to our baby we pray to our baby, we worship our baby. Only beautiful thoughts come to our minds; only beautiful things come to our hands,—surely God sends babies for other reasons than to propagate the species—we are grown entirely unselfish; we are filled with kindly sympathies and affection, and our energies and aims reach to Heaven.

A beautiful pink satin baby basket came direct from Printemps, filled with the most delicate little garments that a human hand

could create. Do you remember the day when we were at school in Paris, that we passed Printemp's baby shop and planned our progenys' outfits—twenty years ago? I am now fuller of the joy of living than I was then—but on the threshold of womanly emotions.

From my window I can see far down the icy canon. The mountain stream is a fluted ribbon of snow and ice, and where the spray tumbled before it froze, there are thousands of filmy rosettes iridescent in the sun's rays. The path is finished and Dr. Harmen is building a snow man. We are civilized aborigines gone mad with youth out here in the frigid zone, and anything as grown up as bridge has failed to interest us. From our home on the summit of "Kewanas Crag," Silver Lake looks like a stray tur-

quoise below and the mysterious Black Hills around us catch glimpses of gold in the sunset hour, then dye themselves purple, take a tint of glowing rose-water, then turn dull and gray; a drama of color goes on ceaselessly; a play of ever shifting hues like those on a pigeon's breast.

Do you know of anyone who has ever died in childbirth? If you do, don't tell me, as I am beginning to be frightened. Not afraid of the agony, for I rather enjoy pondering over the sacrifice, but so fearful of leaving all of this barely tasted sweet behind me. It seems as though my impatience would consume me—I want so to know whether I may be spared for more and more days of our endless joy.

Your Christmas box came one day too soon and, like the child that I am trans-

formed into, I resorted to tears in order to wheedle Carlton into permitting me to open it. The little things are wonderful and the discretion of your love is more so. Each little article is an expression of your faultless friendship, for losing which, not even Carlton's love could compensate me.

The new decorations in my bed room are all in bloom like our love, and I lie awake during my specified hours of rest, gathering mental roses from my wall garden. My revival is as natural as the effect of May on the meadows; of a shower on a dry plant. I awaken with the breath of my Spring, which is heavy with Oriental sweetness like a rose of Frangistan. I should not in such moments as these, feel a death blow.

All of the old mental bruises caused by knocking myself against corners, some that

I myself created at times, and others that I saw but could not escape, are healed and quite forgotten in this new world of mine.

I press a goodnight kiss on your dear understanding lips.

MARIANNE.

The Black Hills.
February 1.

Dearest of all Friends:

Today for the first time I am permitted to write one letter, while Dr. Harmen and Carlton are trying to discover traces of rare genius on the head of Carlton Church Somerville Junior, who resembles one of those cherubs circling about the Eternal Father in an old Italian picture.

Dizzy with the wonder of it all, I lie for hours trying to convince myself that the world is real. When my child awakens and craves his nourishment, I cry for very ecstacy of giving him life. What woman on earth who has nursed her child once, can refrain from doing so again? His velvet lips kiss me; his precious hand, dimpled and in-

mature, fondles me in gratitude. How can any mother ever be unhappy while her infant breathes upon her breast.

My wasted years squandered in society seem hideous fancies of a perverted mind, while my one glorious year out here is a deep-breathing, pure record of clean thoughts and a perfect life. No one save God Almighty to wish us well on our wedding day; no purring women and overfed men to throw rice and old shoes along with the "wedding formula"—"Isn't she a perfect bride,"—"did ever couple seem so well suited,"—"they are real affinities *et cet era,*" all of which started me out on my bridal trip sixteen years ago. I shall never witness another wedding as long as I live—it is too insufferably sad a contemplation.

It seems strange and pitiful that your

sweet daughter is now old enough to make her formal bow into an atmosphere of hatred and vice. If she could but seek rapturous peace out here in my wilderness with some man that she really loves—but no woman is born into mature society with a knowledge of its utter worthlessness. And even were you able to convince her of it now, it would be a sin to rob her sweet mentality of its blushes. No, the precious child must first suffer and find out alone.

Almost childlessly greedy do I feel, to live so perfectly while you are still sacrificing your years on the altar of motherhood. At least I am thankful that Walter has decided to parade his affairs less, now that Evelyn is coming out. You proud, queenly, beautiful woman, how can you be so brave? In your place I should have

died of hopelessness and grief years ago. But you go on with your precious head high in the air, smiling, though crushed by your agony. Day in and day out your nerves are taut—you never rest. Why hasn't something snapped years ago? Perhaps God gives an abundance of strength to those who are ordained to suffer most.

You ask if I have any regrets. No—no—a million times **no.** I have torn the word from my dictionary and have forgotten the meaning. I repeat a thousand times a day my honest prayer:—

"Spare me O Lord the crowded way,
Life's busy mart where men contend,
For me the home the tranquil day,
A little sock to mend."

I try never to think of an end to my happiness, but somehow the crushing thought

comes and stifles me into abject fear. Then my husband brings me my little child and the evil thoughts are kissed away.

Yesterday Carlton's eyes filled with tears of gratitude as I sat nursing our baby before the open grate and running my hand through his thick brown hair as he sat on the floor beside us. We remain long hours in silence watching the pictures in the blazing back logs, then suddenly we embrace to prove mutually that we still have each other.

The river is still a frozen jagged band all down the canon, and the roads are knee deep with snow and ice. I scarcely breathe while Carlton is away in his motor, for fear the wheels will skid and hurl him into endless depths down the mountain side. It is impossible to procure food without his go-

ing to the railroad, but each day I try to believe that I don't need nourishment just to see if I can't prevent these precarious errands. We live so naturally and so happily that we are staying on indefinitely in our frozen love bower.

Dr. Harmen leaves tomorrow after weeks of rejuvenating pleasures out here. The nurse will remain to render me such assistance as I need, though I am so jealous of her care of my son that I shall claim my mother rights as soon as I am strong enough. Junior has his father's eyes with all the softness of the blue periwinkle flower in their splendid depths, and I feel when I hold him in my arms and am held in turn in Carlton's that I can never give either of them up—even to the Almighty. I will never give

them up. They are mine and I am theirs—for all eternity.

Adieu sweet friend,
MARIANNE.

February 25.

It has come. The bright fire in the grate is a heap of smouldering ashes and all the pictures and dreams are dead. I cannot breathe—I cannot live—I am insane with grief. And the ignorant world teaches of an all merciful God—an all seeing Father! The irony of it! I cannot live—I must go too. It will be impossible to go on, and on, alone—forever and for all eternity—alone—I cannot—I will not!

They are lying down there in their shrouds—my husband and his faithful Monkaushka with their poor bodies crushed and mangled—O! I cannot tell you more! The machine is an unsightly heap at the bottom of the ravine. I cannot write—I cannot think and yet I must do both. What

have I done but love with all my womanhood and all my motherhood!

After all it was beautiful for him to die and go to heaven while flowers filled his hands. A loud cry has gone up in my soul; an echo as it were of the funereal *Consummatum est,* which is pronounced in church on Good Friday at the hour when the *Saviour* died. And all day I wring my hands helplessly and can do nought but build dungeons and dungeons in the air. I speak in an altered voice as though my instrument had lost several strings and those that remained were loosened.

Dearest—can you tell me—am I responsible for his death? All during last night I seemed to hear God's voice asking: "Cain, where is Abel?" and I wail and beseech: "Am I my brother's keeper?" My soul is

guilty—guilty of loving him—guilty of his death, for had I not loved him he would never have known the Black Hills. Oh! if I could but be resigned—if I could but bind up my bleeding wounds and lose myself in immeasurable lassitude!

I have pressed his lips for the last time, my precious son is at my breast—his long lashes are pressed tightly against his cheeks as if to secure his eyes from too strong a light, or to aid an effort of his young soul to recollect and hold fast a bliss that had been perfect but fleeting. His tiny pink and white ear framed by a stray lock of his hair and outlined by a wrapping of lace from you, would make an artist, a painter, even an old man wildly in love with his perfect little being, and will, please God, restore me, a mad woman to her senses!

Come to my Black Hills, I am crushed, desolate, heart-broken—come to

MARIANNE.

The Black Hills.

July 2.

One week has passed Dear, since you left us—a strange week of readjustment and thought. All of those precious months that you have given me are but another expression of your divine friendship. The poignant grief is gone with you and my gratitude to you can but be shown by the degree of bravery that I now manifest.

Every day this week, my son and I have sat in the sunshine near the two mounds, which my remaining bronze boy has decorated with crocuses from the neighboring ravine. He spends long hours after dark, gathering wild flowers in the moonlight. His devotion to me and my dead love, is the saddest, most boundless tribute that an un-

civilized mind could offer. Silently he goes about his duties; silently he grieves, and more silently he gathers flowers as a tangible evidence of his devotion.

Your letters have come each day and will come each day until I lie too, beside my love on the desolate mountain side. Such is your unfailing love and sympathy for me, all unworthy of your months of sacrifice and isolation out here in my new home. My son, bless his precious heart, tried to crawl today but the newly developed feat frightened his baby mind and he cried. Closely almost roughly, I crush him to me a thousand times a day, so fearful am I that he too may go to join infinitude.

You ask me to come back to New York. I must refuse your request. I cannot—I cannot leave my home—the only place wor-

thy of the name that I have ever possessed! Some day, maybe, but not now—it is all too dear and consoling to breathe the same air that sustained me in my perfect happiness.

How can you say: "Don't regret." What do you mean? Regret the only joy that my poor starved soul has ever known? No atom of regret enters my grief—only a great unbounded gratitude to God, to the world, to Nature, that one perfect year has been saved from out the wreck of time!

Gratefully,
MARIANNE.

The Black Hills,
September 20.

Two marvelous things have come to me today dear; my son took his first trembling steps alone, and a letter came to me from the man who was my husband. I am trembling with joy over the first and still dazed with lack of understanding of the second. I enclose the letter as I have long since given up trying to think clearly, and must depend upon you, to decide for me any matters of grave import. I am plunged in perplexity; advise me after reading the enclosed letter.

Lovingly,
MARIANNE.

New York,
Sept. 16.

Dear Marianne:

Six years ago, I found myself, though fond of you, glad when business took me away. We spent that summer in different places, but about October lived together again. I was still fond of you, but at that time found Vera, whose company was very pleasing to me. You and I seemed to be drawn away from each other and we decided to separate at the end of December, when I started on my long cruise.

I felt very, very sorry to leave you, but something told me that it was better to do so. I remember you seemed to feel the same, and we kissed each other goodbye as

though we were both sorry for something that had to be.

Leaving the question of dual or multiple personality aside, and putting the matter very simply, I believe that my soul made a right choice in you my wife. I believe that alcohol was necessary for a while to put my body, even at its expense, into a state of conductivity, so that my soul, when I was somewhat alcoholized, could gain some expression; give some glimpses of itself and suggest the trend of my powers. For this reason I believe that some men are made to drink and drug—but that is another subject which I hope to take up with you more fully at some future time.

My soul self has always wanted my wife's soul self, and I believe that if I could have you back, my conquered body self would

never need to wander from home. A little more pliability—all you ever lacked, and which your trouble should have brought you, could make it so that we could live together in very perfect harmony. Then I could release a lot of good plays and good writings, much of which I know already has been completed by my subliminal self. I get frequent glimpses of parts of plays, plots and ideas.

You cannot but feel proud of the success of my last book, which ought to show you that I'm getting a grip of myself. My mother and I were *en rapport* and under the dual personality theory, it is reasonable to suppose that I have been guided by her since her death. I certainly have been guided by God or by her, and it is reason-

able to believe that she is God's instrument of my guidance.

A young man makes whole ranges of mountains out of tiny mole hills which, when he has learned sense, he will spread under his foot without noticing them. Most of our differences were mere mole hills, dear, which couldn't thwart us now. For we are too big now, to be so easily thwarted. Can't we give each other the chance to prove this to each other?

If you will permit me I will love your child as my own—as every real man ought to love every child, dear little unfinished human beings. Formerly I thought I knew a good deal; but God knew better and took me away from you to teach me a few lessons. For they were lessons that I alone needed and God did not want you to un-

dergo them as well as me. They were lessons calling for chastisement and you didn't need chastising.

I've taken God's punishment dear, and thanked Him for it. And I believe I'm fit company for you now.

I am coming next Monday to Custer, four miles from where you are, and on Tuesday morning, starting at eight, I shall walk toward your bungalow by way of the path by the river. I am familiar with every inch of the road, as you know I wrote "Treasure-trove" at the Wilson ranch near your canon.

Will you and your little son meet me if only a few yards from your home so that you may judge for yourself if I am fit company for you now.

If you do not meet me—then the will of Allah be done, for I shall turn back.

DONALD.

October 10.

Your message came too late, dear; already at eight o'clock Tokacon, with my son in his arms, and I were far along on the river path that leads out to the world. Our progress was slow with only the croonings and gurglings of my beautiful child to interrupt the silences of nature, as he clung affectionately to the neck of our red man protector, whose solemnity, though he knew not my mission was superb.

Half way, where Tokacon has built an exquisite rustic bower, we stopped and waited while the Indian returned to the bungalow.

What a strange hour I spent waiting with my baby, who had fallen asleep in my arms. Thousands of rebellious thoughts burned

themselves upon the retina of my brain, as I sat planning and wondering. I want to be just, before I'm generous, or I'm afraid I'll never have the chance to be generous. I sat staring like one at strife with a memory —and then he came, slowly, resignedly. His hair is quite white and there are strange, deep lines on his forehead, and marked parentheses round his mouth which can be but the foot-prints of pain and thought. He could not see us in our secluded shelter and I could not make my mouth utter his name —he who had wrung my heart as a peasant twists an osier withe.

On he walked with his head hung low and a lost look in his eyes—then I called "Don," as I used to do when I loved him, and he stopped suddenly and listened with his hand to his ear. Again I called "Don."

He turned and saw us. Slowly and with the dignity that he cannot lose, he came back to where we sat. He could not speak, but knelt beside us and kissed the baby's lips; my infant opened his innocent eyes and put his arms around Donald's neck, as much at ease as though he had known him all of his dear little life. Awake and rested, he must needs be tumbled about and played with, which our visitor seemed pleased to do. The strain would have been more than terrible, had it not been for the sweet influence of the child who occupied us both constantly on our long walk, **home**.

Meeting one's husband again after so many years, is something akin to the sensations of drowning—every ugly scene of our married life flashed across my brain, also every kindness that he had done me became equally prominent in my memory,

that faculty one cannot cast away as one throws down a *serviette* at table.

Twilight found us still without words for each other, but when the back logs were lighted (these October nights are cold in the Black Hills) our thoughts came more freely. I find that I care for him as I would for something long dead and half forgotten, but I am grateful for that, as I was half afraid that I couldn't be even patient with him. However the tolerance that we learn through suffering is the most beautiful offspring of real grief.

It was very difficult for me to speak of Carlton and our wonderful life that is buried out there on the mountain side, but he is indeed sympathetic and never interrupted the long and frequent silences that my inmost memory created. The logs burnt in halves and fell with myriad sparks and dis-

play to the sides of the fireplace, but we touched them not. He seemed to realize that Carlton and I were not married in the eyes of the law. How he divined it I do not know, unless it is that he has an uncanny way of reading one's thoughts. He said that he knew and that he understood, and further, that I am a stronger and better woman for all that I have suffered and done. He wants me to leave my West and live again in New York, where he hopes to recreate in me the old feeling for him which he so ruthlessly squandered, when it was his own.

He is earnest and sad and I wish that I might care again, for he needs help and so do I, and at least, with our past experiences we might escape some of the ways of wounding each other that married people

seem to possess in such unlimited quantities.

Toward midnight the last candles that Tokacon had placed in the sconces, flickered and went out. The helpless embers flared up for the last time, then sank down resigned. Donald knelt beside me sobbing bitterly, with his head upon my knee. All seems to be grief here on this earth—nothing but grief! For answer I raised his head and kissed his eyes, then fetched a candle and lighted him to his room. I showed him my Indian, sleeping outside my door,—which he never forsakes except to allow me to pass.

Long into the still night I heard sobs, and opening my door I found Tokacon swaying to and fro near Donald's room. He seems to understand grief more keenly than any

cultivated mind that I have ever known, and he never intrudes, though it takes a mighty effort for him to suppress his own sympathy.

At last it grew quiet and we all rested though we did not sleep. The next morning baby and I walked with Donald to the bower where we had met him, and there we parted. Tokacon came and carried the baby back to the bungalow and I followed later on when I felt sufficiently calm to go about my simple duties again. I am not a connoisseur in consciences, therefore I want days and still more days in which to think and weigh, then maybe a decision will come to me as an inspiration.

Donald will see you as soon as he returns to New York—be honest with him and yet beneficent.

A thousand kisses from my son and me.

Goodnight,

MARIANNE.

December 1.

Dearest Lorna:

For the last time I am writing to you from the place which is dearest to me in all the universe. My personal things are packed and on the way to Custer. Tokacon is waiting with his torch to set fire to my palace of dreams.

I could not return to your world—to my old world if I thought that other souls than ours were living in my home. The land, I have given to my Indian with sufficient money to build a home for himself, but not one corner of my own shall remain to be profaned by other human emotions.

Now I am sitting in the machine at a safe distance from the flames, which amuse my son, who is wild with joy and excitement

over it. Tokacon groans and I weep, for it is a tomb in flames before us. Ashes—ashes —everywhere—in my home and in my heart, and every where except in the smiles of my child.

Donald has given me back my home and he has taken rooms at the club—what people think and what people say, mean nothing to me. I shall try bravely to construct something out of the ashes of three lives that will be worthy of the respect of God's elect. I cannot teach myself to forget; I can only await with patience the reawakening which for the sale of Donald and my son, pray God, will not delay too long its coming. I suppose the family cannot be built on a foundation of passion, because something on earth always becomes revengeful when human beings are too happy.

I shall never try to be too happy again.

Now my memories must lie entombed in the arcana of memory. But some day when my son is old enough to understand, I shall come back with him to my Black Hills of Dakota, and breathe to him every sigh of my sorrow. Then if he takes me in his arms and whispers "Precious Mother," I shall not have loved and cherished in vain.

MARIANNE.

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